

THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN.

PUBLISHED ONCE A FORTNIGHT.

PRICE ONE DOLLAR, IN ADVANCE.

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN."—LUKE II. 14.

VOL. I.]

BROOKLYN, (CONN.) MAY 12, 1823.

[No. 8.]

THE design of THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN is to promote inquiry and the knowledge of True Religion. Its pages are open to all parties. Nothing is required of Correspondents but to abstain from every thing in decorous.

THE TRUE MESSIAH EXALTED, OR JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD

MANY of our readers have, we suppose, already seen 'Three Letters' bearing the above title, addressed to a Presbyterian Minister by the Rev. David Millard. We are however induced to occupy some of our pages with extracts from them, owing to what a friend has said to us of the effect produced by them upon his own mind.

After alluding to some uncharitable conduct which had given occasion to these letters the author says—

"As my opinion concerning Christ, the true Messiah, has been the principal subject of your attack, this work will be confined to that subject. I think, in many respects, you have misrepresented my ideas concerning Christ: at least, your accusations have been in a blind, unexplained manner—not calculated to be understood by honest people, unversed in the Scriptures; but rather calculated to prejudice honest minds, and "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

Two accusations have been these: "*They deny the Divinity of Christ.*" "*They do not hold Christ to be God.*" As to the word *divinity*, or term, *divinity of Christ*, they are not found in the bible; but that Christ is a divine person, I think is agreeable to the scriptures: consequently your accusation is groundless. But, sir, instead of using these terms, why did you not come out boldly, and tell the people they hold Christ to be the Son of God, but do not believe him to be the self-existent God, or that God he is the Son of?—Had you stated this, you would have told my honest belief, and people would have known at once what you meant: Or, had you stated that we do not believe God to be three self-existent persons, you would have told the honest truth; but, instead of this, sir, it appears your design has been to prejudice peo-

ple against us, without any desire that they should know our honest belief.

That I do not believe the doctrine of the *Trinity*, I readily admit: and my reasons for rejecting it are, first, because it is very unreasonable: and, secondly, because I think it very unscriptural.

You may perhaps reply that our REASON ought to be no guide to us in this respect.—Such an idea is certainly absurd. Divest a man of REASON and he is at once an idiot, and is reduced to a level with the brutes.—REASON is one of the most noble principles that distinguishes man; nor has the God of heaven ever required us to lay it aside, to believe that which contradicts REASON. A man who does not exercise REASON, is an unreasonable man: from such Paul prayed to be delivered, and this is my prayer. There are, however, things that require our belief, which are beyond our comprehension. There are also things we do not fully comprehend, which do not contradict reason, and of course demand our belief. The existence of God is incomprehensible; but not unreasonable. The machinery of the human system is, in many respects mysterious; but not unreasonable. The formation of particles of matter into a solid body is mysterious; but not contrary to reason. Hence we see some things may be mysterious, and yet reasonable.

I would ask, sir, is not the gospel something consistent with REASON, as well as TRUTH?—If not reasonable, it is a mass of inconsistency: which to believe, we must lay aside our REASON, and of course become idiots. I insist that the gospel is reasonable, and that those who preached it anciently, *reasoned*. 'Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days REASONED with them out of the scriptures.'—(Acts, xvii. 2.)—'And he REASONED in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks.'—(Acts, xviii. 4.) 'But he himself entered into the synagogue, and REASONED with the Jews.'—(Acts, xviii. 19.) 'And as he REASONED of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled.' [Acts, xxiv. 25.] "Come now and let us reason together, saith

the Lord." [Isa. i. 18.] Here we have not only the example of the apostle, but also that of the Lord of Hosts: and will you, sir, yet insist that we must believe that which is unreasonable? The Gospel is a system of REASON; yet many things are preached, for gospel, which are very unreasonable: and I think the doctrine of the *Trinity* one of them.

I ask, sir, what conception can we have of a being existing in three distinct persons? To believe there is a Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is both scriptural and reasonable; but to suppose that these three are only *one* being, is both unscriptural and unreasonable. The *Trinitarian* system supposes that each of these, personally considered, is God: or, in other words, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.—And again, it supposes that it takes all these three to make *one* God. Now how can this be reasonably admitted? If it takes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to make one God, neither of these, personally considered, can be God, any more than one can be three, or three one. According to Apothecaries' weight it takes three scruples to make a drachm; yet no one believes that one scruple singly considered, is a drachm; but that each scruple is an equal third part of a drachm only. If it takes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to make one God, can the Father be God, the Son God, or the Holy Ghost God? Certainly not, any more than one scruple can be a drachm. Three Gods are not one God, any more than three times one are *one*, or two and one are *one*: which not only destroys the rules of multiplication and addition, but is a flat inconsistency.

Some Trinitarians, however, reject the term *person*, and instead of this, use the term *mode*, or *office*: and hold that the *Trinity* consists in one God, acting in three distinct *offices*: that the three distinct *offices* are those of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This system, if possible, is yet more absurd than the former. It is impossible that God should act in more than *one* of these *offices* at one and the same time: consequently, while acting in the *office* of Father, there is no Son nor Spirit: and while acting in the *office* of Son, there is no Father nor Spirit: and while acting in the *office* of Spirit, there is no Father nor Son. This system completely refutes itself: for in finding a character to fill one *office*, it leaves the other two *offices* vacant, and is just no *Trinity* at all. It is reducing characters to

mere *offices*, belonging to certain characters, which is at best only imaginary.

Secondly, The doctrine of the *Trinity* is unscriptural. The word *Trinity* is not found in the bible: but it, and its doctrines, were invented in the third century. Although many pretend to prove the *Trinity* from the scriptures; yet it is certain that no such thing was mentioned, or known of, in the first, second, and third centuries, if any confidence can be placed in the testimony of *Dr. Mosheim*, and other ecclesiastical writers. *Dr. Mosheim* says, "soon after its commencement [the fourth century] even in the year 317, a new contention arose in Egypt upon a subject of much higher importance, and with consequences of a yet more pernicious nature. The subject of this fatal controversy, which kindled such deplorable divisions throughout the christian world, was, the doctrine of *three persons in the Godhead*: a doctrine, which in the *three preceding centuries*, had happily escaped the vain curiosity of human researches, and been left undefined and undetermined by any particular set of ideas."—[Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 339.]

From this testimony we learn that no such idea as three persons in the Godhead was thought of, until some time in the fourth century. In the year 317, the contention first arose upon that subject. After this the word *Trinity* was invented, and the doctrine of the *Trinity* established by church law. History informs us that the man who invented the word *Trinity*, took the word *tri*, which signifies *three*, and the word *unus*, which signifies *one*, and put them together, and it came out *triune*, or *three one*: from this mixture *Trinity* originated. Although *Trinity* is an invention of men, yet that there are three persons in the Godhead is thought by some to be taught in the scriptures. That there are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is abundantly taught; but that these three are three self-existent persons united in only one person or God, I have never read in the Scriptures of Truth. The Father and Son are represented in the Bible as two distinct persons or beings; but the Holy Ghost is no where in the scriptures called a person. It is however admitted that personal pronouns are applied to the Spirit, a number of times in the scriptures; but no candid person, after considering the different application of personal pronouns in the scriptures, can take this as a positive proof that the Spirit is a person. I will here notice

a few things, personified in the scriptures, which are not really persons: "The *depth* saith it is not in *me*, and the *sea* saith it is not in *me*." [Job xxviii. 14.] "*Destruction* and *death* say, *We* have heard the same thereof with our ears." [Job xxviii. 22.] "When they were past the first and second ward, they come unto the *iron gate* that leadeth unto the city, which opened unto them of *his own accord*." [Acts xii. 10.] "And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the *earth* brought forth *her fruit*?" [James v. 18.] Here the *sea*, *destruction*, *death*, and the *earth* have personal pronouns applied to them; yet you do not really believe these to be persons. Several things, said in the scriptures concerning the Spirit, render it difficult for me to believe it a person. "Saith God I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." [Acts ii. 17.] This renders it difficult to consider the Spirit a person. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost." [Acts x. 38.] What conception can we have of Christ's being anointed with a person? Does God pour out a person upon all flesh? Did God anoint Jesus Christ with a person? Certainly you cannot believe this; yet you and I both believe that God anointed Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost."

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF

MATTHEW xxviii. 19.—Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

THE word *name*, by a Hebrew idiom, is often redundant. The phrases *name of God*, *name of the Lord*, express no more than God and Lord. "I will praise the name of God with a song," i. e. "I will praise God with a song." Ps. lxxix. 30. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." Prov. xviii. 10. "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever." Dan. ii. 20. "I will cut off the name of the Chemarims." Zeph. i. 4. In all these examples, the word *name* is redundant, and might be omitted without affecting the sense.

In other cases the *name* of any person signifies the *authority* or *doctrine* of that person. "I am come in my father's name," John v. 43; that is by the authority of my father. "In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk," Acts iii. 6; that is by the *authority* of Jesus Christ. "By what power or name have ye done this?" iv. 7, or, "by what power or *authority* have ye done this?" St. Paul says, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to

do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," xxvi. 9; that is, contrary to the *authority* or *doctrine* of Jesus of Nazareth. "In his name (authority or doctrine) shall the Gentiles trust." Matt. xii. 21.

It hence follows, that being "baptized into the name" of any person, is the same as being baptized into the doctrine of that person, or into the person himself. This is consistent with what is stated in other places. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Gal. iii. 27.—"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" Rom. vi. 3. "They were all baptized unto (into) Moses in the cloud." 1 Cor. x. 2.

To be baptized into the name of the Holy Spirit, does not imply that this spirit is a person, any more than that *death* is a person for the same reason. And if to be baptized into Christ be a proof, that he is equal with God, you may infer the same of Moses.

In the words immediately preceding this 19th verse, Jesus said, "All power is given to me." On the ground of this derived power he sent the apostles to teach and baptize. Was it possible for them to think that he, who plainly declared he received all his power from God, could himself be God, could himself be perfectly equal with the Great Being who gave him all the power he possessed, yea, that he was that Being?

Baptizing in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, simply means initiating the disciples, by that rite, into the christian religion, as originating with the Father, made known by the Son, and confirmed by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

It does not appear that the apostles understood the words in the commission as a form to be used in the administration of baptism; for there is no proof they ever so used them; on the contrary, we are informed, that they baptized in the name of Christ, or in the name of the Lord Jesus. (See Acts ii. 38, and viii. 16, and x. 48, and xix. 5.) They must have understood this to amount to the same thing as baptizing in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. That it was baptizing them into the christian religion. Those who were baptized were said to put on Christ, they took upon them his name, the profession of his gospel.

Sparks & Wright.

THE USURPATION OF THE BISHOP OF ROME.

The supremacy which the Bishop of Rome acquired, has not a parallel in the history of the world. Jesus Christ the common Lord and Master of Christians, declared that his kingdom is not of this world; and he in the most express terms forbid his disciples to cherish the spirit of domination, or to exercise authority over the consciences of men in the concerns of religion. When James and John ambitiously requested the honor of sitting, one at the right hand, and the other at the left, of their Master, in his kingdom of glory, he called the twelve disciples before him, and said unto them—'Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' Yet the ministers of the meek and humble Jesus, in violation of the command of their Lord, did aspire to supreme dominion, as well in civil as ecclesiastical concerns.—The Bishop of Rome, claiming to be the successor of St. Peter, and the vicerent of Christ, succeeded in the attempt to subjugate the understandings and the consciences of men to his authority, and to place their property and their lives at his disposal. The proudest king was made to bow with servile submission to his rule, and the most powerful emperor to tremble at his mandate.

Every reflecting mind must be disposed to review measures which occasioned such perversion of the principles of the gospel, and to trace the steps that led the Christian bishop to this spiritual dominion.

It is well known, that the Pope of Rome, for ages, has founded his claim of supremacy on the plea that this dominion in the Church was given to the apostle Peter, who was, as they affirm, the first bishop of Rome; and that the Pope, as his successor, inherits all the prerogatives which St. Peter possessed. It may not, therefore, be amiss in the introduction, to examine this plea. The pretence that Peter was constituted head of the Christian Church, is founded on the declaration of our Saviour to him. 'Thou art Peter; and on this rock (the meaning of the Greek word *Petros*) I will build my Church, and the gates

of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.' This declaration was made in consequence of Peter's profession of his faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Our Saviour then changed his name from Simon to Peter, and pronounced the above mentioned benediction. But the only distinction which this gave Peter above his fellow apostles, was the honor of being the first to publish the Christian religion to the Gentile world—opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, as Paul expresses it. Peter's address to his countrymen, is the best comment of the promise of our Saviour to him. 'Brethren, ye know that God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth, should hear the word of the gospel.'—That is, first hear it: but in the propagation of the Christian faith, his fellow apostles were his coadjutors. In this cause, St. Paul labored more abundantly, and declared he was not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles.—This is the amount of giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter. It gave him no other privilege than that of first preaching the gospel to the Gentiles: it invested him with no exclusive prerogative. 'On this rock I will build my Church!' You shall have the honor to build up the Christian kingdom: but the other apostles were fellow laborers with him. Christian Societies says St. Paul, 'are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.' 'Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.' This is figurative language, borrowed from Jewish phraseology.—The meaning is, that Peter was commissioned to publish the conditions of pardon and salvation to sinners; and that whatsoever he, under divine inspiration, should publish on earth, as bound or forbidden men, as a disqualification for the happiness of immortality; and whatsoever he on earth should publish, as loosened, or permitted, or enjoined men, pertaining to life eternal, should be ratified and confirmed by the authority of God in heaven.—But this was not the prerogative of Peter alone: the commission for this high purpose was given to all the apostles.

There is not the shadow of evidence that Peter was constituted the bishop of Rome:—that he was ever in the city of Rome, rest

wholly on traditionary evidence ; there is no passage in the New Testament that favors such a supposition. The earliest ecclesiastical historians mention Linus, whose name occurs in the salutation of Paul to Timothy, as the first bishop of Rome. The commission of an apostle extended to the whole Christian community. To station him as a parish minister, or place him at the head of the clergy, of a province, or even kingdom, would be to degrade him from his apostolic office.

Peter was the oldest man among the twelve disciples of our Lord ; and from several passages of the New Testament, it appears that he acted as the president of the standing council of Christians at Jerusalem. In the Gospels, and in the Acts, his name generally stands first, when an enumeration of individuals is made. Matthew, himself an apostle, styles Peter the first : that is, first among equals. He acted as the presiding officer : as such he delivered their decisions, and to him in this capacity, probably letters to the council were addressed ; but it is evident that he possessed no exclusive authority ; for this very council sent Peter and John into Samaria, as their missionaries to the new converts of that province. This appears more like obeying the commands of the council, than claiming a controlling superiority over them. With modern notions of the supremacy of the Pope, what would a Roman Catholic think, if he should be told that the college of cardinals had sent his holiness as their legate, into a distant country ? That Peter claimed no authority over Paul, we know, for Paul withstood him to his face, and carried the point against him. On the whole, the pretence that Peter was invested by his Master with supreme power, in the Church, that he was constituted the first bishop of Rome, and that his successors in office inherit all his power, is without any solid support.

Let us then inquire for the means by which the Pope acquired dominion.

In the age that may be called apostolick, the elder or bishop of Rome was the pastor of a single Church, and was elected to his office by the suffrages of the Christian society. As Christian converts were multiplied in Italy, new Churches were formed, but were considered as branches of the parent Church ;—and Rome, as the capital city of the empire, and the original seat of the parent Church, gave dignity and rank to its bishop. Rome was acknowledged as the great centre of the Christian community, till Constantine remov-

ed his court to the city that bore his name.—

At Rome, all general councils were convened, and here all great questions respecting the polity, the doctrines, and the discipline of the Church were decided. These considerations all tended to increase the importance of this bishoprick. When the civil empire was established at Constantinople, a violent contention arose between the pontiff of ancient Rome and the bishop of the newly honored Constantinople, for superiority. But when the Turks conquered the greater portion of Asia, Constantinople dwindled into comparative insignificance, and Rome maintained without a rival its superiority. But that the bishop derived his relative importance from the place of his residence, and not from any authority transmitted through Peter, is most evident ; for whenever a province of the western empire was divided, in respect to its civil government, which was sometimes done, a corresponding division was made by the ecclesiastical diocese ; and the capital city of the newly established province was made the seat of a new bishoprick, the minister of which was constituted the Metropolitan, of this newly formed diocese.

The favorable circumstances respecting the local situation of Rome inspired its bishop with the spirit of ambition, and a plan of aggrandizement was early formed, which, through succeeding ages, was systematically prosecuted. Science and Literature were buried in the ruins of the Roman empire at its conquest, by the barbarians of northern Europe. An age of ignorance and darkness ensued, favorable to the aspiring views of the ecclesiastical court of Christian Rome. Its bishop no longer deigned to depend for his titles and honors on the election of the Christian society. He claimed a divine right to his office, and professed to rule in the Church by power derived from Christ. The power assumed by one aspiring bishop was never relinquished by his successor, though his natural disposition might be more mild, and his general character approach nearer to the standard of Christian simplicity and godly sincerity. Advantage was taken of the contention of civil princes, and every concession made by emperor or king in the day of depression, or to answer a present purpose, was holden as an established prerogative of the Pope, and was made the means of still higher acquisitions of power ; and in process of time, the head of the Church became a sovereign prince, usurped the most important attributes of civil

government, claimed a superiority over all civil rulers, and by precepts issued from his conclave, disposed of kingdoms and empires. The deepest policy was adopted to promote the purposes of this spiritual tyranny, and efficient measures used apparently not to enlighten the minds of men in the knowledge of religious truth, and to form their dispositions to the spirit of the gospel, but to make them the submissive children of the Church which assumed dominion over their faith. These political measures were various, but all directed to the same object.

*Dr. Bancroft's Sermon's
(To be Continued.)*

FROM DR. CHALMER'S SERMON.

(Continued from page 55.)

"It is said that Papists worship saints, and fall down to graven images. This is very very bad. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'—But let us take ourselves to task upon this charge also. Have we no consecrated names in the annals of reformation—no worthies who hold too commanding a place in the remembrance and affection of Protestants?—Are there no departed theologians, whose works hold too domineering an ascendancy over the faith and practice of Christians?—Are there no laborious compilations of other days, which, instead of interpreting the Bible, have given its truths a shape and a form, and an arrangement, that confer upon them another impression, and impart to them another influence, from the pure and original record? We may not bend the knee in any sensible chamber of imagery, at the remembrance of favorite saints. But do we not bend the understanding before the volumes of favorite authors, and do an homage to those representations of the minds of the men of other days, which should be exclusively given to the representation of the mind of the Spirit, as put down in the book of the Spirit's revelation? It is right that each of us should give the contribution of his own talents, and his own learning, to this most interesting cause; but let the great drift of our argument be to prop the authority of the Bible, and to turn the eye of earnestness upon its pages; for if any work instead of exalting the Bible, shall be made, by the misjudging reverence of others, to stand in its place then we introduce a false worship into the heart

of a reformed country, and lay prostrate the consciences of men, under the yoke of a spurious authority."

Understandest thou what thou readest?

This was the question of Philip to the Ethiopian Nobleman as he returned from Jerusalem and was reading a passage in Isaiah's prophecy. I wish to give this inquiry a wider application.

No book is so much read and at the same time so little understood as the bible. Unfortunately, men in general use more vague terms and have more loose conceptions about religion than any other subject. This might be made obvious in many ways. Let any one after he has conversed on religious topics, or after praying, pause and recall the expressions he has used, and endeavour to attach a precise meaning to them, and he will find it to be far more difficult than he could have imagined. Again—let any one read a chapter in the New Testament (and he may take the simplest,) let him undertake to affix a definite sense to every phrase and word he meets with, and he will be surprized at the difficulty of the process. Or if you attend to the thoughts of other men, you will find the same want of distinctness. You may put to silence almost any fluent talker upon religion, by the simple question "understandest thou what thou sayest?" And it is a question too, which may often disturb the most discriminating in their views and the most guarded in their language. Indeed the hardest question in all moral and religious speculations is 'what do you mean?' and if a definite answer to this question had always been given, thousands of disputes would have been ended at once.

This vagueness in the ideas of men is perfectly manifest from the endless disputes that have prevailed among them. How many huge volumes of controversial theology would have been reduced to a few scanty sheets, if men had understood either their antagonists or themselves!

From the evidences we pass to the causes of this obscurity in our notions of religion.—One without doubt is to be found in the nature of the subject; it being spiritual, abstract and removed from our ordinary and sensible apprehensions of things. Another cause however and still greater exists in our indifference to the subject. Men are not

troubled with vague ideas about commerce, agriculture, politics; and it needs but the same intense interest to give them far more clear and impressive ideas of religion too.

But there is yet another cause of this obscurity which has suggested to me the leading subject of this essay. It is found in the circumstance that much of our religious phraseology is drawn from an ancient book; from writings characterized by a style so different from our ordinary modes of expression, that the adoption of it in common discourse would appear extremely singular and absurd; from writings, too, marked by circumstances, customs and habits of thought, which have long since passed away and which are now either unknown or disregarded.

This antiquated style of the scriptures has conspired with other causes, to produce in many minds the feeling that religion is something strange, unintelligible, mystical and above all and worse than all, that it is something to be kept quite distinct and separate from the ordinary courses of thought and the ordinary conduct of life. The style of the New Testament does not differ more from our common modes of expression, than religion, the subject of the New Testament, is by many supposed to differ or to be distinct from the common duties of life.

What is proposed in this essay therefore is, to enter a little more particularly, than we are perhaps accustomed to do, into the meaning of some of the most common terms and expressions, by which in the New Testament, religion and the subjects of religion are described. Concerning many of these expressions common as they are, there may be not a few individuals of whom the inquiry might be properly made, "understandest thou what thou readest?" This question was indeed addressed to an Ethiopian, who had been before ignorant of the Scriptures; but it is possible yea probable that our very familiarity with them may have rendered us dull of apprehension; or may have made us less attentive to the particular meaning and force of what we read; and all this will be so much the worse as it comes under the guise of knowledge. If we were reading for the first time, we might ask with the Ethiopian Nobleman for some man to guide us, but we have read or heard the scriptures read often and long—we have read till we imagine there is nothing more to learn. D.

(To be Continued.)

FROM THE UNITARIAN MISCELLANY.

If we are asked whether there are not many passages in the Scriptures, which an unlettered man finds himself unable to comprehend, we answer, undoubtedly there are, but this is no reason why he should not be perfectly able to understand the general system of Christian doctrine and duty. Christianity was not meant to perplex and confound its votaries, to make them melancholy, or to drive them mad. It will be an important part of our design to advance and enforce some great and leading principles, which if adopted, will preserve the plain and honest inquirer from being troubled by meeting a few difficult sentences among the luminous revelations, and the simple directions and assurances of the gospel. A text here, and a word there, which have been mistranslated, or misconceived, will not make God less wise, just or merciful; will not affect his unity, his goodness, his wisdom or his power; and will not deprive men of their ability to do his will or obtain his favour.

We have no respect whatever for the long list of errors, which are so generally maintained as the essentials, but which we consider the corruptions of our religion. We see nothing engaging in the fancies and imaginations which have spoiled the simplicity of truth, and yoked mysticism with its sublimity. Neither do we esteem falsehood as in the least degree more venerable, because it is a hundred, or a thousand years old. We only think it a pity that it should have lived so long. We shall therefore do all that is in our power, small as that power may be, to weaken the influence, and check the progress of those doctrines, commonly designated as orthodox, which have neither beauty nor utility to recommend, nor scripture to support them.

From the new Editor's Address.

EVIDENCES OF GROWTH IN RELIGION.

In our last we warned our readers, in the words of Dr. Doddridge, against certain false marks of religious growth. We now present to them, from the same excellent author, the genuine marks, of that heavenly growth. I would entreat you, says he, to bring your own heart to answer, as in the presence of God, to such inquiries as these.

"1. Do you find divine love, on the whole, advancing in your soul? Do you

feel yourself more and more sensible of the presence of God; and does that sense grow more delightful to you than it formerly was? Can you, even when your natural spirits are weak and low, and you are not in any frame for the ardours and ecstasies of devotion, nevertheless find a pleasing rest, a calm repose of heart in the thought that God is near you, and that he sees the secret sentiments of your soul: while you are, as it were labouring up the hill, and casting a longing eye towards him, though you cannot say you enjoy any sensible communications from him? Is it agreeable to you to open your heart to his inspection and regard; to present it to him laid bare of every disguise: and to say with David, Thou Lord knowest thy servant. (2 Sam. vii. 20.) Do you find a growing esteem and approbation of that sacred law of God, which is the transcript of his moral perfections? Do you inwardly esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right? (Ps. cxix. 128.) Do you discern, not only the necessity, but the reasonableness, the beauty, the pleasure of obedience: and feel a growing scorn and contempt for those things which may be offered, as the price of your innocence, and would tempt you to sacrifice or to hazard your interest in the divine favor and friendship? Do you find an ingenious desire to please God: not only because he is so powerful, and has so many good and so many evil things entirely at his command; but from a veneration of his most amiable nature and character? and do you find your heart habitually reconciled to a most humble subjection, both to his commanding, and to his disposing will? Do you perceive that your own will is now more ready and disposed in every circumstance, to bear the yoke and to submit to the divine determination, whatever he appoints to be borne or forborne? Can you in patience possess your soul? Can you maintain a more steady calmness and serenity when God is striking at your dearest enjoyments in this world, and acting most directly contrary to your present interests, to your natural passions and desires? If you can, it is a most certain and noble sign, that grace is grown up in you to a very vigorous state.

2. Examine also, "what affections you find in your heart towards those who are round about you and towards the rest of mankind in general."—Do you find your heart overflow with undissembled and unrestrained benevolence? are you more sensible than you once were of those endearing bonds which unite all

men, and especially all Christians, into one community; which make them brethren and fellow citizens? Do all the unfriendly passions die and wither in your soul, while the kind, social affections grow and strengthen? and though self love was never the reigning passion since you became a true Christian; yet as some remains of it are still to be ready to work inwardly and to shew themselves especially as sudden occasions arise, do you perceive that you get ground of them? Do you think of yourself only as one of a great number, whose particular interests and concerns are of little importance, when compared with those of the community, and ought by all means, on all occasions to be sacrificed to them?

3. Reflect especially "on the temper of your mind towards those whom an unsanctified heart might be ready to imagine it had some just excuse for excepting out of the list of those it loves, and towards whom you are ready to feel a secret aversion, or at least an alienation from them."—How does your mind stand affected towards those who differ from you in their religious sentiments and practices? I do not say, that christian charity will require you to think every error harmless, It argues no want of love to a friend in some cases, to fear lest his disorder should prove more fatal than he seems to imagine; nay sometimes the very tenderness of friendship may increase that apprehension; but to hate persons because we think they are mistaken, and to aggravate every difference in judgement or practice into a fatal and damnable error destroys all christian communion and love, is a symptom generally much worse than the evil it condemns. Do you love the image of Christ in a person who thinks himself obliged in conscience to profess and worship in a manner different from yourself? Nay farther, can you love and honor that which is truly amiable and excellent in those in whom much is defective; in those in whom a mixture of bigotry and narrowness of spirit which may lead them perhaps to slight, or even to censure you? Can you love them, as the disciples and servants of Christ, who, through a mistaken zeal, may be ready to cast out your name as evil, (Luke vi. 22.) and to warn others against you as a dangerous person; This is none of the least triumphs of charity, nor any despicable evidence of an advance in religion.

From "Rise and Progress of Religion." Chapter xxvi.